

Digital Services in the Nordic Welfare States: what about the Partially Digital User?

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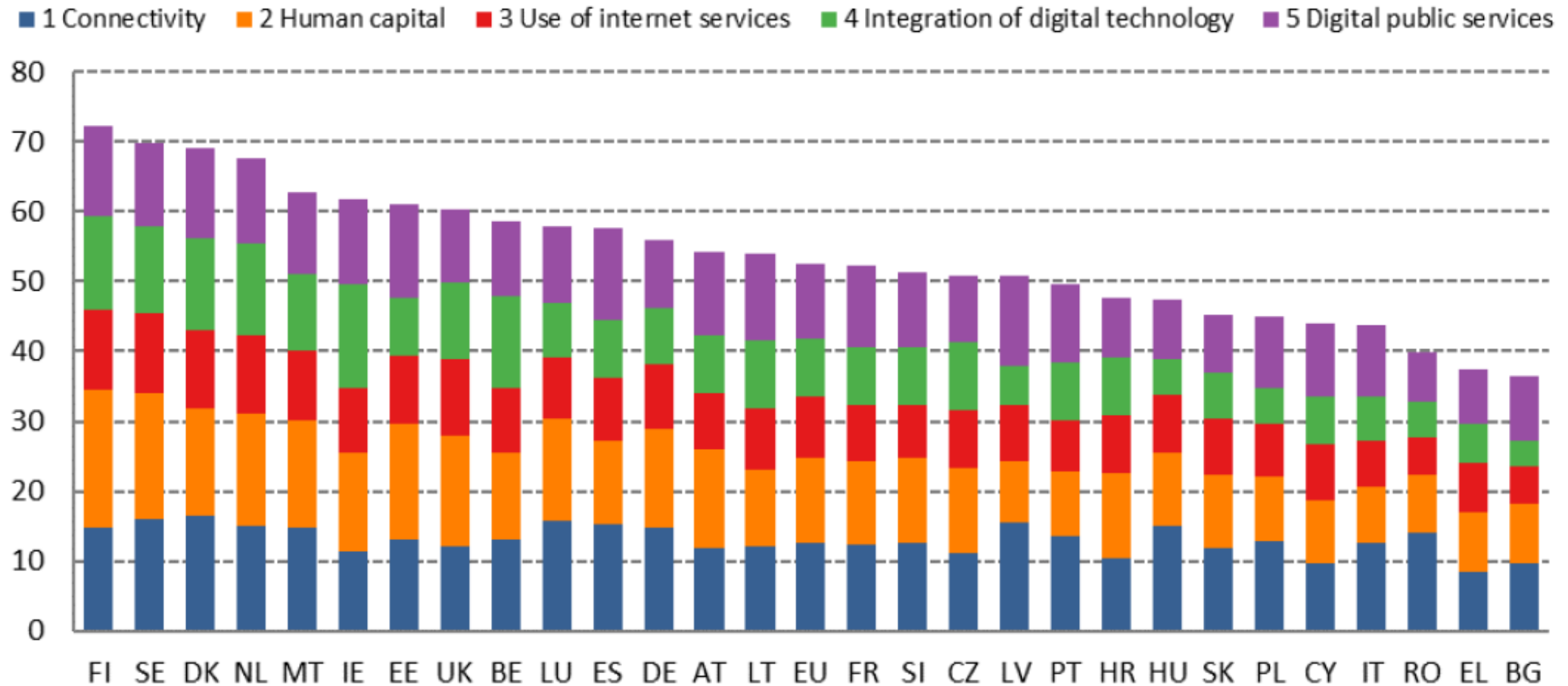


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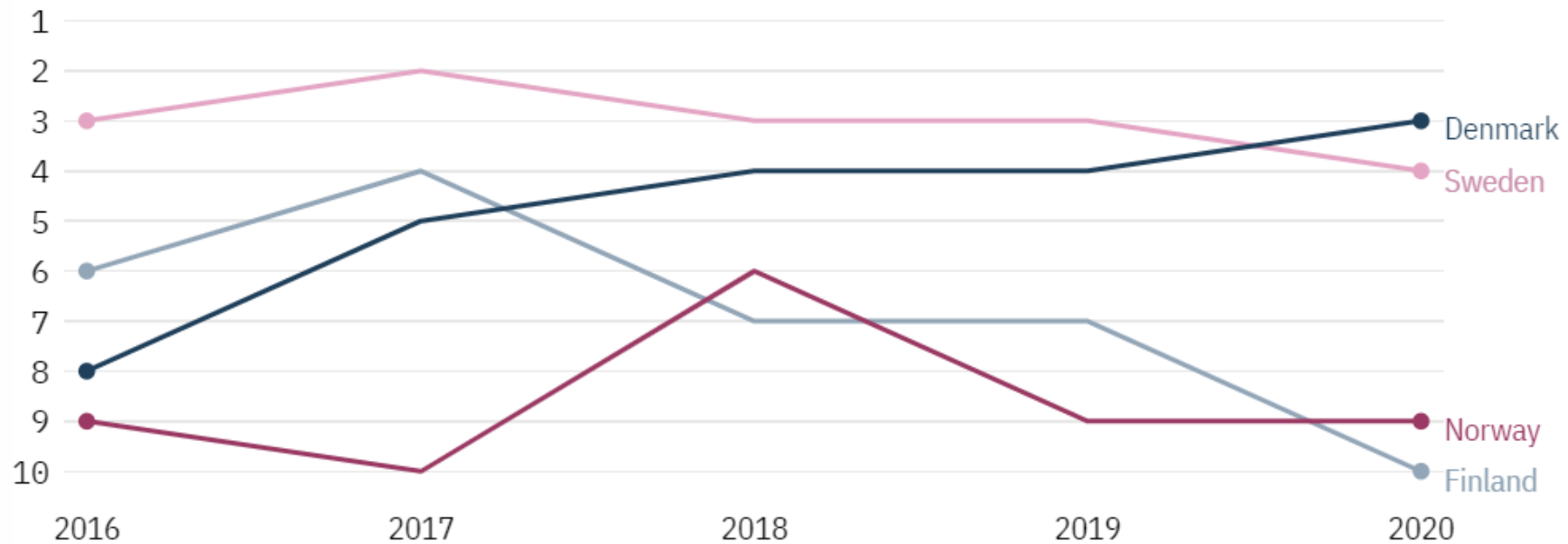
The Digital Economy and Society Index (DESI)



Source: DESI 2020, European Commission.

Digitalization in the Nordic countries

Global digital competitiveness rankings

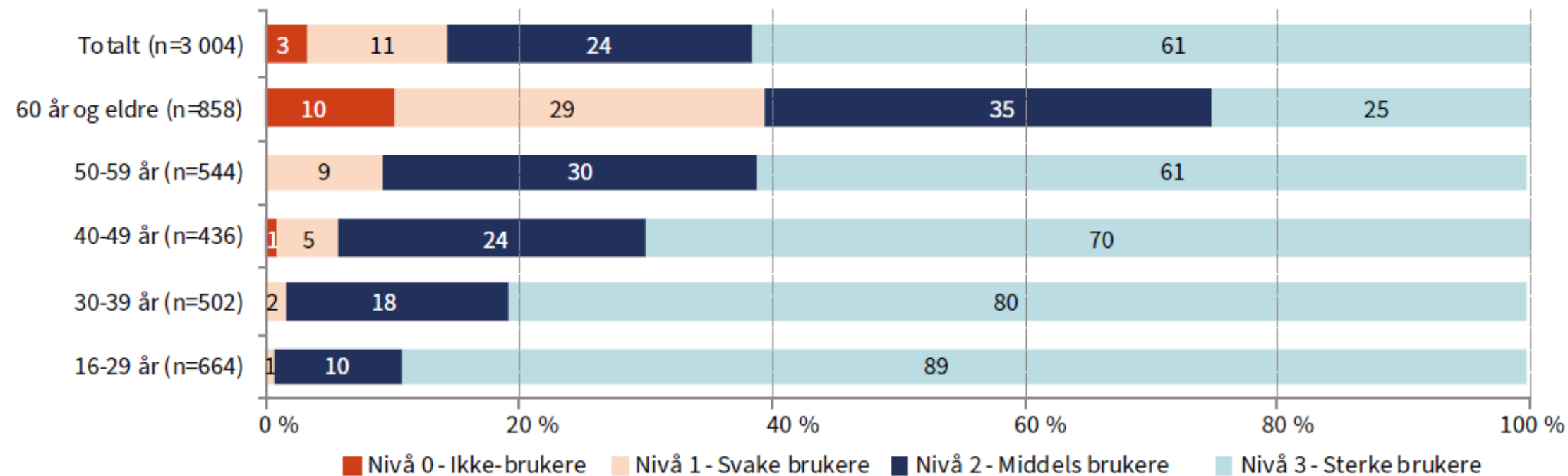


Source: [IMD](#)

TECHMONITOR

Digital competencies in the Norwegian population (study published spring 2021)

FIGUR 5 Nivå på grunnleggende digitale ferdigheter i befolkningen, fordelt på alder. Prosent.



The Nordic countries

- Extensive digitalization of public services
 - ... but still unmet needs
- Research project:
 - *Infrastructures for partially digital citizens: Supporting informal welfare work in the digitized state*
- Supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers



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Infrastructures for partially digital citizens: Supporting informal welfare work in the digitized state (2021 – 2023)

Project partners:

- IT University of Copenhagen (Denmark), host
- University of Agder (Norway)
- University of Gothenburg (Sweden)

- Agency for Digitisation (Denmark)
- Aarhus Municipality (Denmark)
- Agder Municipalities (Norway)
- The Swedish teachers' union (Läraryrskombundet)
- Microsoft
- Implement Consulting Group

Policy approach

- Digitalization policies
 - Advocates digitalization and increased use of self-services
 - Initiatives to strengthen the digital competence of (elderly) users
- Inclusion policies
 - Digitalization seen as contribution to increased inclusion, less attention to digital exclusion
 - Seek to improve the design of digital services wrt. accessibility

Who is «the Partially Digital User»?

- We will to conduct **empirical studies** that allow us to go beyond the 'binary' approach of «fix the user» or «fix the system»
- Studies of users who struggle to access and use digital public services:
 - What are the situations and barriers they encounter?
 - How do they approach it? Which resources do they utilize?
 - How, where and to what degree is informal support available?
- Empirical studies within
 - Healthcare (digital healthcare services)
 - Social services (welfare services)
 - Education (digital teaching, learning platforms)

«The Partially Digital User» - blurring the categories

- With this notion we wish to unpack some of the aspects of being a digital user
- Is «the partially digital user» a fixed set of citizens that can be identified and remains stable across situations? Or is it more fluid?

«The Partially Digital User» - blurring the categories

- User is somewhat digitally competent
 - E.g. user competent in digital sociality (SoMe) etc. but not more complex services
- User is temporarily unable to use digital services
 - E.g., ill, hospitalized, etc.
 - The situation in which the service is used (e.g. I forgot my glasses, I can do it on the home computer but not another, too much sunlight to see screen)
- User competent, but preferring or requiring face-to-face service
 - E.g. complex cases that don't fit self-service model
- User competent, but 'bugs' and limitations reduces value of service
 - Exclusionary digital identity infrastructures
 - Limited functionality of services requires additional use of non-digital services/contacts

The partially digital user

- A multifaceted term that can help us explore situations of exclusion
- Relational, ecological, situated analysis:
 - Examine the skills and competencies of a person as related to the task, the situation, the available resources (support)
- A term that may give indications to 'partial solutions'